

Appl. No. 11/707,842
Preliminary Amendment

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Amendments to the Claims

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the Application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Cancelled)
2. (Cancelled)
3. (Cancelled)
4. (New) A system for providing product location information to customers within a store, the system comprising:
 - a plurality of user interfaces situated respectively at respective positions within the store in a substantially stationary manner, the user interfaces configured to receive input signals from and provide output signals to the customers in the store, wherein each of the user interfaces includes a memory unit; and
 - a hub that is at least indirectly in communication with each of the user interfaces, and that is capable of accessing at least one database, the at least one database including both product location information and additional store-related information,
 - wherein the hub is periodically in communication with each of the respective user interfaces and provides portions of the product location information thereto, and
 - wherein, upon receiving a first of the input signals representative of a product location inquiry from a first of the customers at a first of the user interfaces, the first user interface obtains relevant product location information from the respective memory unit of the first user interface, and subsequently the first user interface provides a first of the output signals as a response to the first input signal based upon the relevant product location information.
5. (New) The system of claim 4, wherein the first user interface includes:

**Appl. No. 11/707,842
Preliminary Amendment**

a receiver configured to receive the first input signal, the first input signal being a voice signal,

a speaker configured to provide the first output signal, the first output signal being a synthesized voice signal, and

a voice recognition and response unit configured to process a receiver signal indicative of the first input signal and configured to provide a speaker signal from which the speaker generates the synthesized voice signal.

6. (New) The system of claim 5, wherein the voice recognition and response unit includes a microprocessor programmed with voice recognition and voice synthesization software, and further includes an input button, wherein the first user interface is configured to receive the first input signal from the first customer only for a predetermined period of time after the input button has been triggered.

7. (New) The system of claim 4, wherein each of the user interfaces is at least one of a stand-alone device and a device configured to be mounted on a structure within the store.

8. (New) The system of claim 7, wherein the first user interface is configured to be at least one of fixed at an end of an aisle of the store, fixed near a middle of an aisle of the store, fixed within a point of purchase display of the store, fixed on a wall of the store, embedded within a shelving structure of the store, fixed near a checkout counter of the store, and suspended from a ceiling of the store.

9. (New) The system of claim 4, wherein the first user interface includes a keyboard entry device configured to receive the first input signal, the input signal being a keying-in action,

a visual display unit configured to provide the first output signal, the first output signal being a visual output, and

**Appl. No. 11/707,842
Preliminary Amendment**

a keyboard recognition and response unit configured to process a keyboard signal indicative of the first input signal and configured to provide a video signal from which the visual display unit generates the visual output.

10. (New) The system of claim 9, wherein a second of the user interfaces includes:
a receiver configured to receive a second of the input signals, the second input signal being a voice signal,

a speaker configured to provide a second of the output signals, the second output signal being a synthesized voice signal, and

a voice recognition and response unit configured to process a receiver signal indicative of the second input signal and configured to provide a speaker signal from which the speaker generates the synthesized voice signal

11. (New) The system of claim 9, wherein the keyboard entry device and the visual display unit form a single touch screen input device, and wherein the first user interface further includes a printer which is configured to print out at least one of listings and maps.

12. (New) The system of claim 4, wherein further comprising means for allowing communication between the hub and at least one of the plurality of user interfaces, and wherein the means for communicating includes at least one of a wired link, a wireless communications link.

13. (New) The system of claim 4, wherein the hub is a mobile device capable of being physically transported to the respective positions of the respective user interfaces and being plugged into the user interfaces so as to allow communication between the hub and the user interfaces.

14. (New) The system of claim 4, wherein the first user interface is incorporated as part of a point-of-purchase display within the store, and wherein the first user interface is

**Appl. No. 11/707,842
Preliminary Amendment**

also capable of providing at least one of price and promotional information concerning a product that was the subject of the product location inquiry.

15. (New) The system of claim 4, wherein at least some of the product location information and additional product-related information stored within at least one of the respective memory units of the respective user interfaces and the at least one database is updated over time to reflect changes in inventory occurring within the store.

16. (New) The system of claim 4, wherein the first user interface is also capable of providing a plurality of output signals that are indicative of at least one of the following: an indication of at least one type of product that is located in an aisle with which the first user interface is associated; further location information concerning where a general product category is located within the store; an indication of an alternative product to a first product to which the first input signal related; and an indication of how to proceed to a restroom within the store.

17. (New) The system of claim 4, wherein the hub is in communication with other hubs located at other stores.

18. (New) The system of claim 4, wherein the system keeps track of a difference regarding a first number of inquiries received relating to a first product and a second number of the first product that are actually sold at the store.

19. (New) A system for providing product location information within a store, the system comprising:

an information unit including processing circuitry and a database containing product location information and additional product-related information, the information unit configured to receive an input signal, to process the input signal, to obtain at least a first portion of the product location information and at least a first portion of the additional product-related information from the database in response to the processed

Appl. No. 11/707,842
Preliminary Amendment

input signal, and to provide an output signal that is determined based upon at least the first portions of the product location information and additional product-related information, and

an input/output device that is positioned at a position within the store in a substantially stationary manner, the input/output device configured to receive a user voice input concerning a product location inquiry and to provide the input signal to the information unit in response to the user voice input, and to receive the output signal from the information unit and to communicate a user output in response to the output signal,

wherein the input/output device includes a voice recognition and response unit by which the user voice input is capable of being processed, and

wherein the input signal includes at least one of customer identification data indicative of an identity of a user and other information upon which a customer typology can be determined, and wherein at least one aspect of the user output is determined at least partly in response to at least one of the customer identification data and the other information.

20. (New) The system of claim 19, wherein at least some of the product location information and some of the additional product-related information is updated over time to reflect changes in inventory occurring within the store.

21. (New) The system of claim 19, wherein the voice recognition and response unit at least one of:

is capable of generating a synthesized speech signal that is the output signal; and includes an input button, wherein the voice recognition and response unit only accepts the user voice input within a pre-determined amount of time after a pressing of the input button.

22. (New) The system of claim 19, wherein the additional product-related information includes information regarding at least one of the following: information concerning a quantity of the product within the store; information concerning a price of

**Appl. No. 11/707,842
Preliminary Amendment**

the product; information concerning a presence or absence of the product within the store; information concerning a time at which the product should be available at the store if the product is currently absent from the store; information concerning a sale/promotion relating to the product; information concerning an alternate store at which the product may be available; and information linking one product with another product in a cross-referential manner.

23. (New) A point-of-purchase display in the store, the display comprising the system of claim 19.